

# Trainer Bets On His Horses

Horses are the most important thing in life for Jeff Matthews, a young rancher in Duplin County.

"I could never be happy doing anything else," the 27-year-old trainer and breeder said. He tried college, but Matthews discovered early his interests were in the out-of-doors with horses and cattle.

"In 1975 I went to work for a horse trainer in Illinois. Then I spent two years on a ranch in California learning to rope and herd cattle. I have worked with the best trainers in the country and have had good experience in breaking and training."

Going into business with his brother Jim on a 1,000-acre family farm near Warsaw, Matthews has established a business called Jeff Matthews Quarter Horses. Last winter they moved a barn and a small house from three miles away. Matthews now lives in the house, close to the barn and paddock and his 15 horses.

"I like to live near the horses. If I hear a barn door banging at night I am right there to investigate," he said.

Matthews spent several months enlarging and remodeling the old barn. Skylights in the roof now brighten the barn's interior. Fenced paddocks adjoin the

stalls. A neat tack room has rows of hooks holding reins and gear and several western saddles. Four dogs and five cats roam the premises.

"I am particular about when the horses eat, so I do the feeding myself, along with Raeford Best, my helper on the farm. We feed a lot of oats and coastal bermuda hay, staying away from sweet feed," Matthews said.

Completing the fencing of a 20-acre pasture is the current project so five mares and foals can be brought home from a Georgia breeding farm before cold weather. The ultimate plan for the fenced pasture is a 150-by-300 foot arena for training horses to round up cattle.

Quarter horses are a beautiful and versatile breed, Matthews said. "They can be trained for jumping, as polo ponies, to rope cattle and to run a quarter mile. They have wonderful temperaments and are good with children."

Quarter horses are stocky with big chests and muscular hind quarters, and while most are sorrel color, there are a few gray and buckskin coats in the paddock.

"My business is to raise top quality horses to show and sell," Matthews said. "I believe in taking good care of my horses, and I want to train them well. I also love

performing in horse shows." Matthews and his sister, Carroll, a student at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, rode in competition at the Virginia State Fair in Richmond last week. Miss Matthews participated in the pleasure class, demonstrating rider ability and smooth movement of the horse. Matthews competed in the reigning class, putting his horse through intricate paces of stops and turns.

Dressed in denim jeans, boots and cowboy hat, Matthews brushed the long flowing tail of Okan Leo, the handsome buckskin gelding that is his working cow horse. The two have won prizes in shows in Arizona, Reno and San Francisco.

"I never trim tails or manes," he said. "I like long tails dragging the ground, even if they do have to be washed, wrapped and oiled. This horse had a leg injury and had to rest for a year, but he is now fit and ready to go again."

One of Matthews' newest acquisitions is a 3-year-old

stallion from California. "I'm getting him ready for a show in Texas," Matthews said. He plans to take two horses to the Quarter Horse Congress in Columbus, Ohio, this month. Matthews called it the largest horse show in the world.

He admitted he has taken some falls, but he hasn't broken any bones. His scrapbook of rodeo pictures is filled with photographs of him and his horses in action at various shows.

"I have ridden horses all my life because my grandfather, O.S. Carroll, was a horse lover, and he provided us with ponies," Matthews said. "My grandmother, Gladys Carroll, now a resident at Cornelia Nixon Davis Nursing Home, still has a love of horses, and when I have my horse van in Wilmington I go by the nursing home and bring her out to the trailer so she can greet the horses."

He said his mother, Joyce Carroll Matthews of Warsaw and Figure Eight Island, has never taken to horses in spite of lifelong exposure. "She even rolls up the car window if she sees me approaching her on a horse," he said, laughing.

"My grandfather really started this business, but most of his interest was for the kids," Matthews said. "He died last year and I miss him. I'd like to have his advice once in awhile."

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## Along the Way

By Emily Killeto

Visitors to the Duplin County courthouse may have viewed portraits of several men painted during the early 1900s. These men, though unknown today, were some of Duplin's leading citizens.

Portraits of Thomas Stephen Kenan, James Menzies Sprunt, D.D., Benjamin Franklin Grady, John Miller Faison, Stephen Miller, William Anderson Allen, John Dickson Stanford, William James Houston and John Nicholas Stalling, D.D. were commissioned by county officials from 1912 to 1937. Most of the portraits were painted by Faison artist Mary Lyde Hicks Williams. During 1937, Duplin's Register of Deeds A.T. Outlaw released an article in the September 16 edition of THE DUPLIN TIMES listing a brief biographical sketch of each man's life. The portraits were hanging side-by-side at the time in the courtroom.

Thomas Stephen Kenan was born in Duplin County

February 12, 1838. He opened a law practice in Kenansville about 1860 and left the business to serve in the Civil War. As a member of the Confederate army, Kenan served as Colonel of the 43rd N.C. Regiment and was captured at Gettysburg after being wounded. Kenan resumed his law practice at the end of the war and served Duplin in the House of Commons during the 1865 and 1866 sessions. Leaving Duplin, Kenan served several years as Mayor of Wilson City. Later he was elected N.C. Attorney General and served from 1877 to 1885. The following year, 1886, Kenan became Clerk of the State Supreme Court and served until his death on December 21, 1911.

James Menzies Sprunt was born Jan. 14, 1818 in Scotland. After receiving his education, Sprunt came to America where he settled in Duplin County about 1840. After teaching a few years, Sprunt became headmaster of the old Grove Academy in Kenansville. Sprunt served as headmaster 15 years before taking the position of President of Kenansville Seminary. Licensed into the Presbyterian ministry in 1849, Sprunt was ordained and installed as pastor of Grove Church in Kenansville during 1851. He served Grove Church until 1861 when Sprunt received a call to the 20th N.C. Regiment as chaplain. Returning to Duplin at the conclusion of the Civil War, the Reverend James Menzies Sprunt, D.D. resumed his church work until his death Dec. 6, 1884. Sprunt's portrait now hangs at James Sprunt Technical College.

Benjamin Franklin Grady was born near Sarecta in Duplin County October 10, 1831. Grady grew up in Duplin and attended the State University. After graduation Grady relocated

in Texas where he worked as a professor of mathematics and natural sciences at Austin College in Huntsville. Grady enlisted in Confederate Company K, 25th regiment of the Texas Cavalry at the beginning of the Civil War. Grady denied offers of promotion during the war preferring to serve as a sergeant. While riding with his regiment in North Carolina, Grady contracted typhoid fever and remained at Peace Institute Hospital in Raleigh until the close of the Civil War. Grady chose to return to Duplin as a teacher and later County Superintendent of Schools. He served as superintendent from 1881 to 1891, when he was elected to office as a member of Congress. He served in Congress four years, then returned to teach in Duplin until his death March 6, 1914. The B.F. Grady school outside Kenansville bears the educator's name.

Biographical sketches of John Miller Faison, Stephen Miller, William Anderson Allen, John Dickson Stanford, William James Houston and John Nicholas Stalling will follow in the next two editions of ALONG THE WAY.



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